



**PUBLIC HEARING
CAPITAL BUDGET REQUEST
FISCAL YEAR 2007**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2006
11:30 AM
Council Committee on
Education, Libraries and Recreation**

**TESTIMONY
District of Columbia Public Library
Francis J. Buckley, Jr., Interim Director**

Good morning Chairman Patterson and members of the Council Committee on Education, Libraries and Recreation. I am Francis Buckley, interim director of the District of Columbia Public Library. I appreciate the opportunity to give testimony before this committee on the vision for the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2007 Capital Budget proposed for the Library.

I will start my testimony by affirming that, indeed as Richard Levy stated, I will be returning to retirement upon the installation of a permanent director. I am pleased to have been available to respond to the Board's request and lead the library system over the last year. I have appreciated working with the Board, staff, Mayor, City Council and library patrons.

The D.C. Public Library system is in the midst of a monumental transformation that is being watched closely by citizens across the District as well as public libraries and local governments across the country. The transformation is going to be successful as a result of a number of variables working in concert: the capital and operating funding commitments by Mayor Williams, the reconstituted Board of Library Trustees,

the vision for a 21st century state-of-the-art library system captured in the report of the Mayor's Task Force on the Future of the D.C. Public Library System, the installation of the new permanent director, and the support of the City Council. The dramatic funding increase for the library system that is included in Mayor Williams' budget has generated high hopes and expectations for this transformation to be realized.

We're in a critical time for our library branches. The existing branch library system needs to be redeveloped into a contemporary, state-of-the-art service provider that delivers to members of the community improved access to the world of information. This budget gives us a unique opportunity to have a positive affect the neighborhoods throughout the District. New funding streams for rebuilding and renovating branches is of paramount importance because the average age of our library buildings is 47 years and they have not been well-maintained much less modernized. The elevators in most branches have passed their useful life. All our buildings require ADA upgrades, new space allocations that are wired for technology and well-coordinated service areas that reflect public expectations for 21st Century branches.

We have mapped the budgeted library modernization projects to show how these capital improvements will touch all parts of the city. While this budget hearing formally covers FY 2007- FY 2012, we felt it was important to show you what is already funded in 2006. This budget proposes a capital allocation for DCPL of \$16,250,000, which added to our expected carryover of capital funds from FY 2006 will give us a total of over \$38.7 million for our building projects.

This slide shows that we have capital funds for rebuilding the four neighborhood branches that are currently closed: Anacostia, Watha T. Daniel/Shaw, Benning, and Tenley. We are in the process of soliciting architects for the design of these branches. To provide library access in the respective neighborhoods while these branches are being rebuilt, we are excited to be finalizing leases on interim facilities. As a result of our experience the Board has adopted a policy prohibiting the future

closure of libraries slated for reconstruction or modernization until interim sites have been opened. There are also funds for renovating Georgetown and Mount Pleasant, and rebuilding Francis Gregory. Initial plans are under development for these libraries and we are engaging citizens in these discussions.

The FY 2007 capital funds will enable D.C. Public Libraries to plan to replace the Sursum Corda Community Library in the new Northwest One neighborhood and build a library as part of a public/private development. This will allow the costs of full library construction to be subsidized. At the same time, the Washington Highlands, Petworth and the Southeast Libraries will be fully rebuilt or rehabilitated through a Federal/District partnership, with Federal government funds paying \$16 million of the capital costs and the District investing \$9.2 million.

In FY 2009, the \$26.6 million in capital funds will allow DCPL to begin work on six neighborhood branches: Takoma, Lamond Riggs, Northeast, Southwest, Cleveland Park, and Parklands Turner. As you can see in this year, the Library will be making significant progress in improving crucial libraries in all parts of the city.

FY 2010 will start the planning and design process for three other branch libraries – Capitol View, Chevy Chase and Palisades – at a cost of \$26.8 million, while construction is underway on previously designed projects.

Lastly, in 2011 and 2012, approximately \$60.2 million is budgeted to begin the planning and design process for Woodridge, West End, and Juanita E. Thornton/Shepherd Park branches. On that note, there has been a lot of concern in the West End neighborhood in particular about combining mixed use as their library is modernized. While the Library Board can see value in providing a mix of uses on site, we are adamant that delivering library service to the community is the central focus in whatever financing or development method is utilized.

While the branches are integral to the library system, so too is the central library. It is essential because it maintains extensive book and audiovisual material collections

that cannot be duplicated or housed in branches. It acts as the center of the library system, providing universal access to an expanded base of information, technology, resources and services for residents. On the operational side, it is the hub of the entire library system's many support services.

Implementing this plan for transformation of the library system requires a sound financial strategy. The Mayor's budget provides for this through the "Library Omnibus Financing and Development Act of 2006." As we have seen in other cities, in almost every instance the transformation of their library system began with building or rebuilding their central library, which has proven to be the engine that pulls the whole system forward. But the rebirth of the central library in other cities was merely the first step in rebuilding the entire neighborhood branch system. Therefore, the Mayor's financing strategy uses the central library as the engine for change.

In this legislation the plan is to use the lease of the existing building occupied by the central library as a catalyst for financing the reconstruction or modernization of the branches and building a new Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library on the Old Convention Center Site. The other elements of the funding plan rely heavily on non-General Fund resources, including: a PILOT on the current central library building, a \$40 million TIF on the Old Convention Center site, a \$30 million funding commitment by President Bush in the budget he is presenting to Congress, and an aggressive private fundraising capital campaign that will be developed and executed by the D.C. Public Library Foundation. This creative financial strategy will ensure that the entire system can be revitalized. The Library Omnibus Act also calls for independent procurement authority so the library will be able to respond immediately and independently to fulfill procurement needs during the rebuilding effort.

Preparing for this transformation organizationally is our top priority. We have visited the most progressive, innovative and successful library systems in the country and have seen what they and their local governments have accomplished working together. We are now adopting the best practices from many of these systems – and how they successfully took their library systems through significant physical

transformations – to develop DCPL’s organizational approach. Specifically, drawing from the best practices of Seattle, which modernized or rebuilt 29 libraries including its central library, and Los Angeles, which did so with 37 of its libraries, including its central library, we learned that it will be crucial for us to do the following to build capacity:

- Hire more staff as Facility Project Managers and project support staff, in tandem with the project implementation schedule. In Seattle there were eleven FTEs in the Capital Construction Program, with a project manager assigned for every three branches. In Los Angeles project managers were also responsible for overseeing three branch projects at a time;
- Develop a process whereby the library administration and Capital Construction project management staff work closely with the public, architects and construction firms in building or modernizing the libraries;
- Create inclusive processes where the public is engaged from the initial planning and design concepts, through the programmatic planning for each branch, to the final renderings;
- Have independent procurement authority to allow for the accelerated transformation of the neighborhood branches and the central library. Referring back to best practices, in Seattle with independent procurement authority they were able to hire an architectural firm in two months, and were able to hire a contractor in 10 weeks. Comparatively, Los Angeles did not have independent procurement authority, subsequently leading to four months to hire an architect and five months to hire a contractor. Independent procurement authority enabled Seattle to build neighborhood libraries in 2 ½ to 3 years compared to Los Angeles where it took 3 to 4 years;
- Develop a Board policy for how to proceed with case-by-case analyses on whether or how mixed-use development can be used effectively in bringing to communities more robust branch libraries.

Since I won't be involved in the execution of the library's capital strategy, I want to take this opportunity to give you a candid perspective about what it has taken to get to this point and what must be done to make this transformation successful.

When I arrived at D.C. Public Library a year ago what I found was a system in disarray. Circulation figures were alarmingly low and overdue notices had not been sent out in six years. Internal operations were inefficient due to a variety of reasons, including ineffective management. Staffing levels in public service, maintenance and support-office areas were anemic. Buildings had deferred maintenance in the tens of millions of dollars. Service hours were too low to support the needs of the public. For a system this size the budget was insufficient to adequately support the collections, maintenance and safety needs. The books, media collections and electronic information services were overrun and outdated. Public access to computers was hampered by insufficient numbers of terminals as well as frequent downtime. And, four branch libraries had been closed and were about to be rebuilt using construction plans that weren't properly programmed by the Library.

While I was able in my short tenure to address some of these fundamental problems, many will remain for the new director to continue to tackle. During this year with added funds in the FY 2006 budget, the Library increased branch service hours to the public from 48 to 54 per week. Some management changes and consolidation of divisions have increased efficiency to a degree. Additional materials purchased with the increased FY 2006 collections budget plus a project to remove outdated books and materials has resulted in a nearly 10% increase in citywide circulation figures. Overdue notices and a standardization of circulation procedures and fines are being implemented this spring. And, the contract to rebuild the four branches was halted in time to avoid constructing inadequate libraries and efforts began to find storefront space in which to operate interim libraries while the branch rebuild work is done.

What I found while working on Capital Construction projects and what I believe will be challenges for the new director is:

- A need for a new overall capital construction plan, rationalizing the branch service pattern and facility needs per the Library Enhancement, Assessment, and Development Amendment Act of 2005 legislation;
- Crumbling infrastructure, everywhere;
- Administrative, Facilities and Capital Construction staff capacity;
- Bureaucratic procedures that inhibits speed, efficacy and efficiency from city agencies, such as OCP, OPM, OCTO, OAG and DCRA;
- Procurement processes.

DCPL's vision for what it could become has crystallized over the last year as a result of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Task Force into one that is breathtakingly exciting. The vision for our library system is representative of what the capital city means not only to Americans from coast to coast, but to those that live, work and play right here. Today we look upon library systems such as those in Seattle, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Nashville, and Miami, as the pinnacle of public library service, technology, operations and architecture. With Mayor Williams' FY 2007 capital budget and Omnibus Library Act legislation, we are on target to be transformed into the forefront of American public libraries. As an Executive Board member of the American Library Association, I have received commiseration and commendation from my professional colleagues for accepting the challenge to work with and for DCPL, but I think with the blueprint and implementation plans now before us we can develop into an exemplary public library for the nation's capital. This budget has us on track to fulfill that expectation...to make this not only a capital library for a capital city, but a monumental public library system. Thank you.